

the licence of its own native land, has made polygamy the abiding law of every Mahometan people. The Gospel nowhere forbids slavery; but it lays down precepts whose spirit is inconsistent with slavery, and which have, after a long struggle, succeeded in rooting out slavery from all European, and from most Christian lands. But Islam, by the very fact of enforcing justice and mercy for the slave, has perpetuated the existence of slavery among all its disciples. Christianity, by giving no civil precepts, has remained capable of adapting itself to every form of government, to every state of society. Islam, by enforcing a code of precepts which were a vast reform at Mecca and Medina in the seventh century, has condemned all the lands of its obedience to abide in a state of imperfect civilization. Christianity lays down no rule as to the relations of the ecclesiastical and civil powers; it lays down no rule as to the political and civil dealings of its disciples with men of other creeds. Islam, by attaching the civil power to its religious head, has condemned all Mahometan nations to abiding despotism; by enjoining the toleration of the unbeliever on certain fixed conditions, it hinders the establishment of real religious equality in any land where it is dominant. It is easy, by picking out the brightest spots in the history of Islam and the darkest spots in the history of Christendom, to draw an attractive picture of the benefits which Islam has given to the world. It is easy, by shutting our eyes to the existence of the Eastern Rome, to persuade ourselves, not only that science and art made great advances in the hands of the Mahometan disciples of Byzantium, but that they formed an actual monopoly in their hands. It is easy, by dwelling on the splendors of Bagdad and Cordova, to forget the desolation of Africa, the trampling under foot for so many ages of the national life of Persia. It is easy to show that the teaching of Islam was in itself far better than the idolatry of India, better even than the shape which the creed of Zoroaster had taken in later times. Nay, it may be that, in some times and places, Islam may have been felt as kindling a truer spiritual life than some of the forms of corrupted Christianity. But it is well

to remember that the same corruptions which had already crept into Christianity, crept, in their own time, into Islam also. The mystic superstition of the Persian, the saint-worship of the Turk, have fallen as far away from the first teaching of the Prophet of Arabia as any form of Christianity has fallen away from the first teaching of the Gospel. But let it be that, in all heathen and even in some Christian lands, Islam in its first and best days appeared as a reform. Still it is a reform which has stifled all other reforms. It is a reform which has chained down every nation which has accepted it at a certain stage of moral and political growth. As such, this system of imperfect truth must ever be the greatest hindrance in the way of more perfect truth. Because Islam comes nearer to Christianity than any other false system, because it comes nearer than any other to satisfying the wants of man's spiritual nature, for that very reason it is, above all other false systems, pre-eminently anti-Christian. It is, as it were, the personal enemy and rival of the faith, disputing on equal terms for the same prize. It has shown itself so in the whole course of history; it must go on showing itself so, wherever the disciples of Mahomet cleave faithfully to the spirit and the letter of their own law.

Yet, notwithstanding all this, we may do justice to whatever is good in the system; we may admire whatever was good in its founder. We may lament that a man who began as so mighty an instrument of good in his own time should have changed into an abiding instrument of evil for all time. Still we may admire the personal virtues of the man, his constancy in the days of his adversity, his sublime simplicity in his days of triumph. And we can look with sympathy on earnest believers in his teaching, who labor to spread the knowledge of such imperfect truth as they have among those who are still further cut off from the knowledge of the right way. Islam, we should never forget, is still a missionary religion, one which still makes its way, by persuasion as well as by conquest, into the dark corners of the heathen world. We may sigh that the preaching of an imperfect creed proves everywhere the greatest hin-